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Review of *Conservative Social Policy: A Description and Analysis.* Leon Ginsberg. Reviewed by David Stoez, Virginia Commonwealth University.

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together several themes from two, including the disproportionate concentration of state poverty and welfare populations in major American cities, as well as the looming anxiety around decreasing federal and state funding of basic public assistance programmes.

Big Cities in the Welfare Transition will be of particular interest to scholars, graduate students, and practitioners wanting a current, accessible, and comprehensive overview of several large American cities' struggles with fiscal retrenchment, neoconservatism, and the further ideological decline of higher governments' financial and administrative support of society's most marginalized. The book provides some of the big picture analysis, but concentrates especially on current goings-on and on providing recent information. Intended to be a progress report, the data is fresh, salient, and potentially the basis of further, more comprehensive and contextually elaborate research on urban America's contemporary social welfare crisis.

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Leon Ginsberg, *Conservative Social Policy: A Description and Analysis*. Chicago, Nelson Hall, 1998. $23.95 papercover.

Two decades after conservatism assumed hegemony in domestic policy, social work is finally coming to grips with its implications. *Conservative Social Welfare Policy* serves as a fine primer of conservative ideology as it has influenced American social programs. Ginsberg's analysis is multifaceted, fair, and insightful. This book is essential reading for students of social welfare policy.

As a first edition, significant omissions are evident, however. Ginsberg's distinction between conservatism and *neo*conservatism illuminates one cleavage within conservative thought; however, the difference between libertarians and the traditionalist movement also warrants exploration. The works of three central thinkers are omitted: Theda Skocpol who substantiates Union veterans' benefits as the first federal welfare program—created by the Republican party, no less; Peter Berger and John Neuhaus's *To Empower People*, which presents the theory of mediating structures; and Lawrence Mead's *Beyond Entitlement*, the seminal argument behind "the new paternalism" in welfare policy. Moreover, no overview of the conservative influence in social

policy is complete without some attention to "welfare capitalism", the wage-related benefits of workers in the primary labor market, as well as corporate philanthropy, an important source of funds for the nonprofit sector.

As a welfare statist, Ginsberg's portrait of conservatism is one of an alien ideological influence on social policy as liberals correctly understand it. While this may be the conventional wisdom for social work, the approach ignores the very real failures of liberally-inspired social welfare as it has (d)evolved in America. By the time of the 1996 federal welfare reform act, public welfare had become a bureaucratic debacle, held in contempt by everyone having the misfortune to encounter it. Child welfare, another field of practice associated with social work, is a national scandal, even if the profession fails to recognize it as such. Community mental health-inspired deinstitutionalization, on the other hand, has been widely recognized as a programmatic disaster for the mentally ill. Tellingly, on page 185 Ginsberg voices dismay about "social work professors" who argued the liberal case for public welfare "to generations of students, [but] never seemed to convince people to support the public assistance programs as they existed." The failure of social work to propose credible theory, engage in substantive field research, and envisage program alternatives explains much of the defection from liberal social welfare to conservative thought on the matter. There was nothing "inevitable" about the American welfare state project; social work's failure to assess and innovate its programmatic manifestations have much to do with the discrediting of liberalism.

Conservative dominance notwithstanding, the post-industrial context of social welfare *should* be auspicious for social work. The service sector of post-industrial societies continues to expand; people demand an increasingly diverse array of services. What welfare statists had presumed (and preferred) to be public utilities—welfare, health care, child welfare, corrections—are becoming social markets. The reality of this transformation is immediately evident in the large number of graduate students opting for private clinical practice in social work, an essentially dated form of *petit capitalism*. Awkward though it may be, social work's capacity to respond to the opportunities of the post-industrial environment rests with its willingness to acknowledge democratic-

capitalism as the culture's political economy and use ideology to advance its mission. This requires a nuanced appreciation of conservatism in all its variations.

From this perspective, there are many opportunities to advance social justice, even if the political climate is conservative. Rather than conclude the book abruptly with a summary of the 1996 welfare reform act, Ginsberg could speculate about future directions in social policy that represent a congruence between values of social work and conservatism. Such speculation serves an important function: it invites debate about the future of social policy. By way of illustration, during the 1980s conservative think tanks proposed and debated such innovations as establishing urban enterprise zones, attacking behavioral poverty by making receipt of welfare contingent on behavior, and privatizing Social Security. At the time these were radical suggestions; to the chagrin of liberals they are now central to discussions of social policy.

Ginsberg's book is an overdue addition to the literature; with luck it will be up-dated in future editions. Toward that end there are numerous flaws in the book that could be cleaned-up by a good editing. The manuscript is cluttered with heads and subheads, many of which are unnecessary. Extensive quotations from *Losing Ground* and the *Contract with America* could be shortened and followed by critical assessment; the research literature on making receipt of welfare contingent on specific behaviors is extensive and warrants an overview. The author of *The Triumph of Conservatism* is Gabriel Kolko. Finally, on page 105, it is unclear whether the four social policy principles I propose apply to liberalism or *neo*liberalism—it is the former. These may seem to be small matters, but they unnecessarily diminish the timely message of a substantive scholar.

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Jennifer L. Eberhardt and Susan T. Fiske (Eds.), *Confronting Racism: The Problem and the Response*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998. $29.50 papercover.

With the title of *Confronting Racism*, one might conclude that the book has an activist or applied slant. However, this impression